THE MERCHANT OF ROMANCE

IT SEEMS IT'S BEEN RUN FOR THREE GENERATIONS NOW
THE HALL IS... RATHER OLD, ISN'T IT?
THE ROMANCE VILLA WEDDING CHAPEL
IT CAN'T BE TOO POPULAR NOW, RIGHT?
CELEBRATING THE UNION OF THE HAGAZAKI AND KOBAYASHI FAMILIES

YOU CAN'T COME!?
WHAT?
WHAT!?
WE'RE THE ONLY WEDDING PARTY HERE?
EVEN THOUGH TODAY IS TAIAN,
I GUESS THEY DON'T HAVE AIR CONDITIONING ...
YOU'RE REALLY LEAVING US IN IT?

T/N* Japan uses the Rokuyou (six day) system to determine lucky and unlucky days. Wedding chapels are usually tripled booked on Taian, the luckiest day

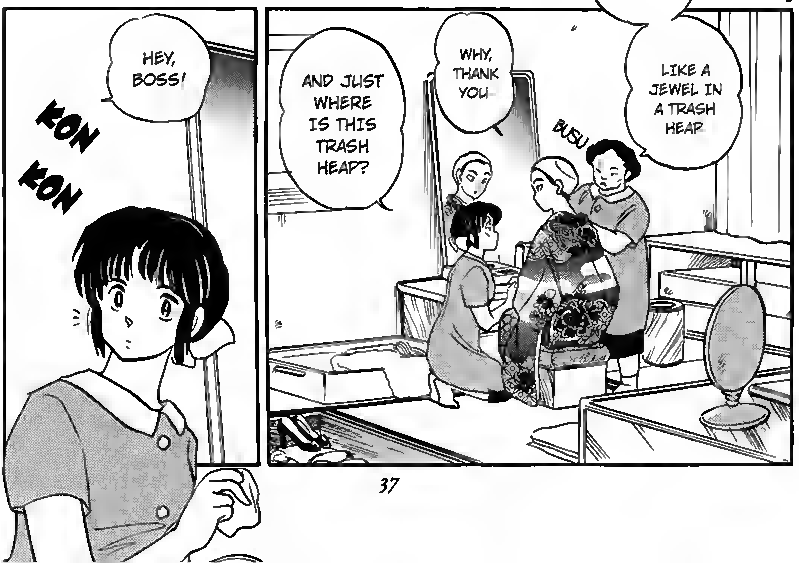
そんっ
HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO HAVE A WEDDING CEREMONY WITHOUT A SHINTO PRIEST...?
COME EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO CRAWL!!

<Sfx> Zawa

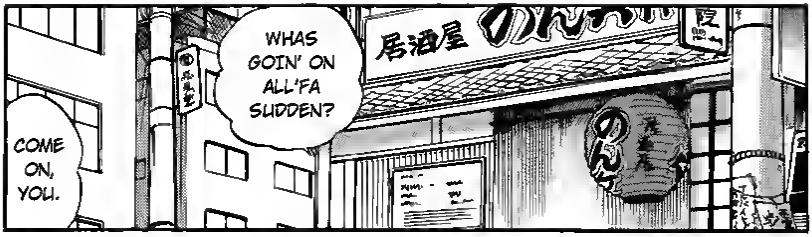
.....
AH, PLEASE, THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY!
AH.
ZAWA ZAWA

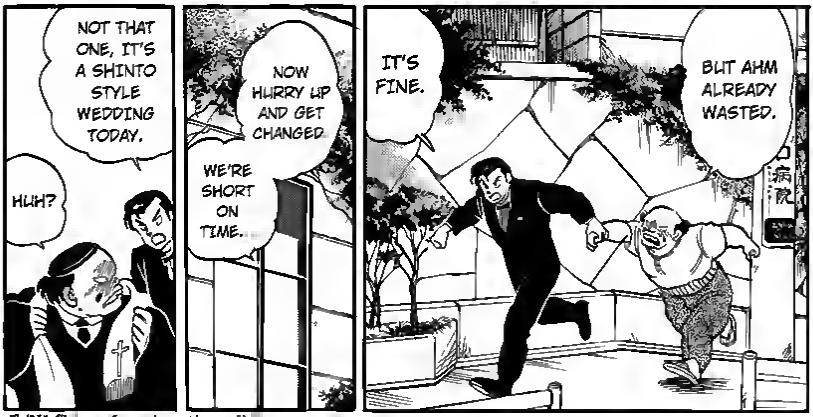
BRIDAL CHANGING ROOM

3


OH, HOW BEAUTIFUL
LIKE A JEWEL IN A TRASH HEAP
BUSU
WHY, THANK YOU
AND JUST WHERE IS THIS TRASH HEAP?
HEY, BOSS!
KON KON

HE CAN'T COME,
BECAUSE HIS BACK HAS GONE?
WHAT IS IT, BETTOU-KUN?
IT'S JUST THAT DAMNED PRIEST..
SINCE HE'S JUST A PRIVATE CONTRAC-TOR,
HE CAN'T FIND A REPLACEMENT.
THIS IS WHY I SAID WE SHOULD HAVE CONTRACTED WITH THE SHINTO SHRINE ASSOCIATION ..
AND JUST WHERE ARE WE GOING TO FIND THE MONEY FOR THAT!?
GO FETCH THE OLD CARETAKER.
AND HURRY!
GUESS WE'VE GOT NO CHOICE
ERM...
KNOCK IT OFF!
YOU'RE MAKING THE BRIDE NERVOUS!!




NOT THAT ONE, IT'S A SHINTO STYLE WEDDING TODAY.
HUH?
NOW HURRY UP AND GET CHANGED.
WE'RE SHORT ON TIME.
IT'S FINE.
BUT AHM ALREADY WASTED.

T/N* Shinto-Japan's native religion

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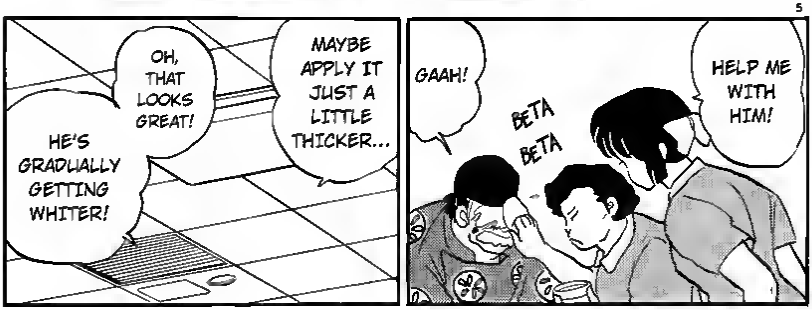
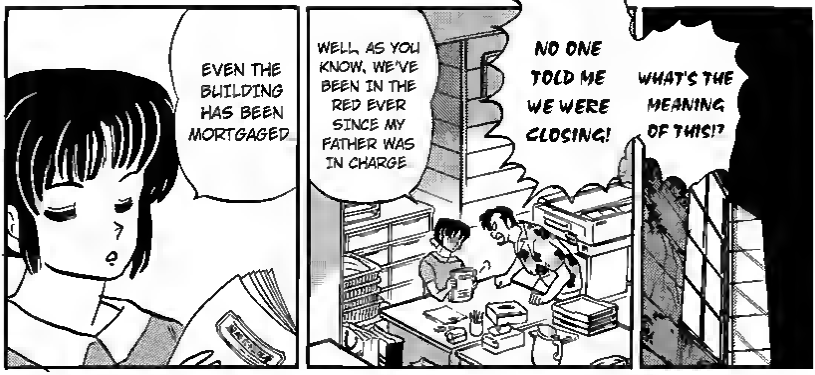
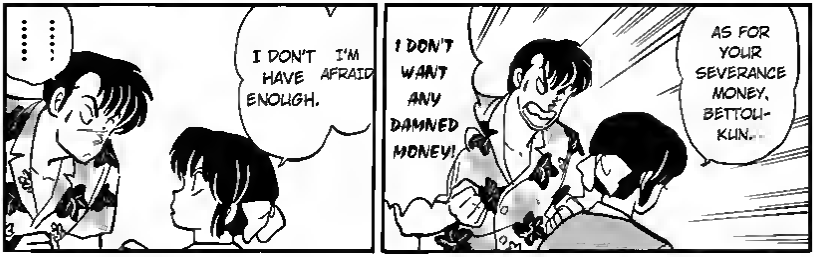
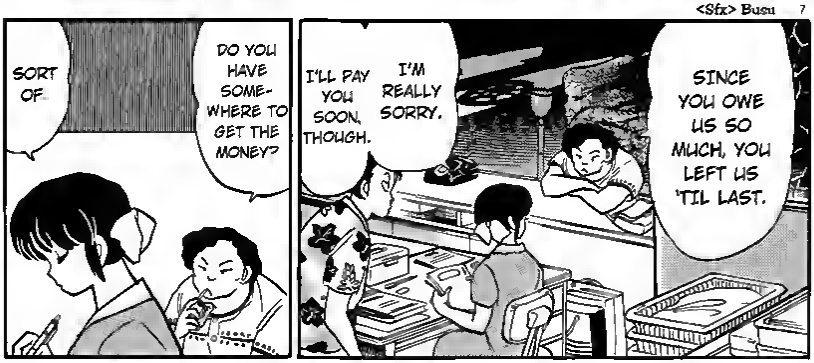


SHWA SHWA
CHA
KUSHI KUSHI
CHA
EVERYBODY, THANKS FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK OVER THE YEARS.
YOU TAKE CARE TOO, BOSS.
IT'S NOT MUCH, BUT... HERE.
YOUR REDUNDANCY PAYMENT...

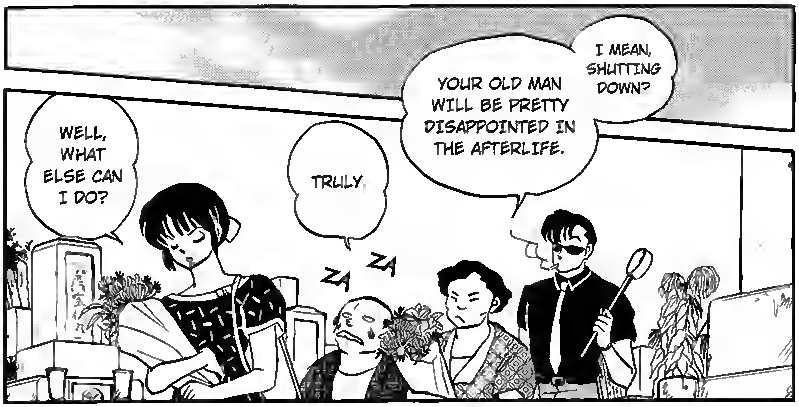

EVEN THE BUILDING HAS BEEN MORTGAGED
WELL, AS YOU KNOW, WE'VE BEEN IN THE RED EVER SINCE MY FATHER WAS IN CHARGE
NO ONE TOLD ME WE WERE CLOSING!
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS!?

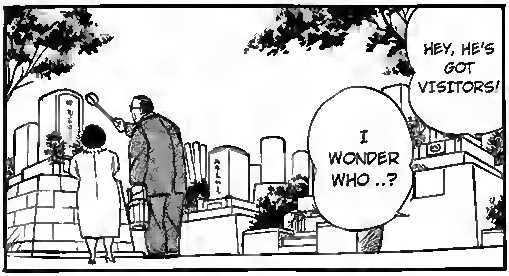

I DON'T HAVE I'M AFRAID ENOUGH.
I DON'T WANT ANY DAMNED MONEY!
AS FOR YOUR SEVERANCE MONEY, BETTOU-KUN...

IT'S BECAUSE BETTOU-KUN AND I HAVE BEEN WORKING HERE FOR SO LONG.
ぎゅっ

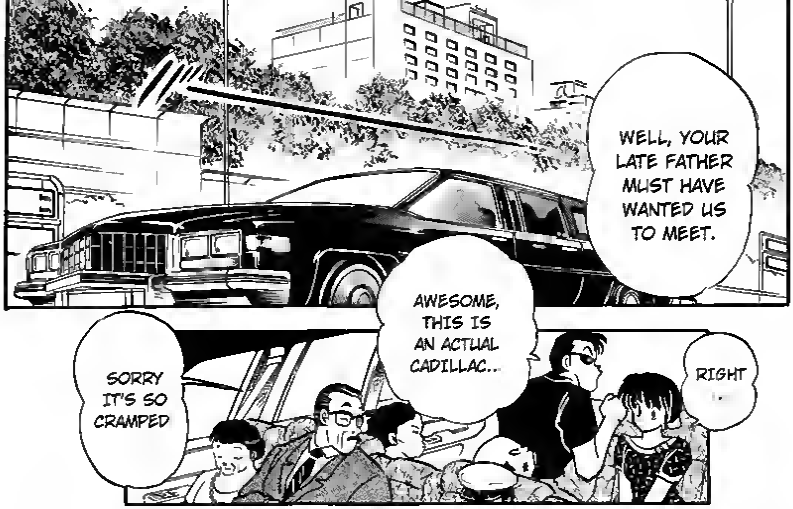

SORT OF.
DO YOU HAVE SOME-WHERE TO GET THE MONEY?
I'LL PAY YOU SOON, THOUGH.
I'M REALLY SORRY.
SINCE YOU OWE US SO MUCH, YOU LEFT US 'TIL LAST.

THOSE ALIMONY PAYMENTS ARE LATE...
THIS WOULD HELP A LITTLE.
IT'S YUKARI.
AH, KEIICHI?
YEAH, I WANTED TO HAVE A LITTLE CHAT...
WELL THEN, TOMOR-ROW AT 6
HE ENDED UP GIVING AWAY MOST OF THE FORTUNE HIS FATHER HAD AMASSED.
HE LOVED TO HELP PEOPLE AND PEOPLE TOOK ADVAN-TAGE OF HIM...
MY FATHER WAS TOO KIND-HEARTED...
8
THE ONLY THING I INHERITED FROM HIM
WAS THIS ABOUT-TO-- COLLAPSE WEDDING HALL...

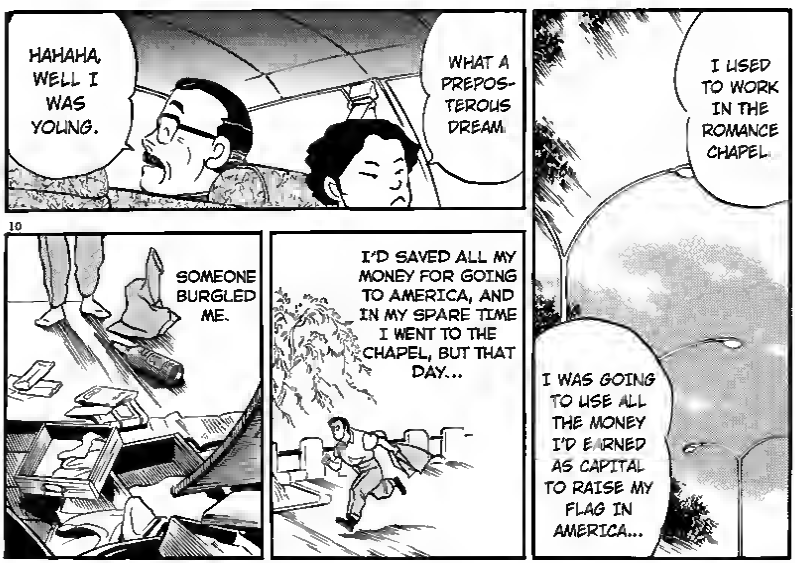

WELL, WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?
TRULY.
ZA ZA
YOUR OLD MAN WILL BE PRETTY DISAPPOINTED IN THE AFTERLIFE.
I MEAN, SHUTTING DOWN?

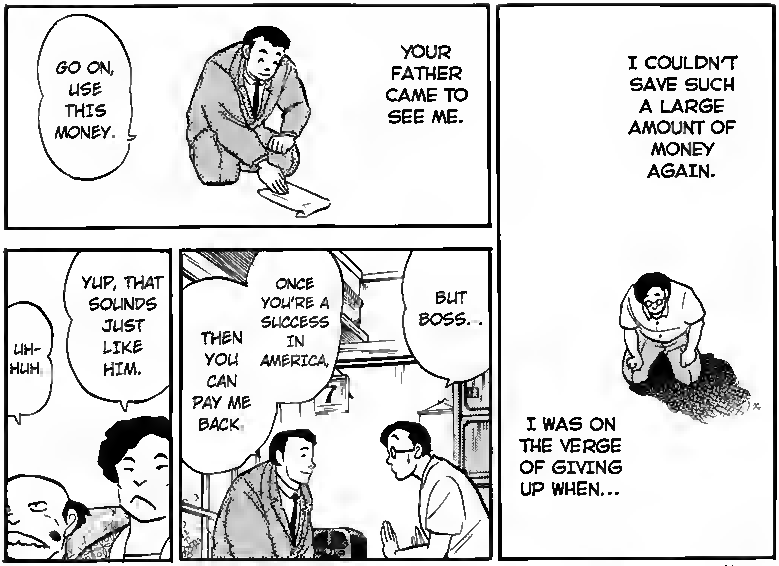

I WONDER WHO ..?
HEY, HE'S GOT VISITORS!

UHMM ...

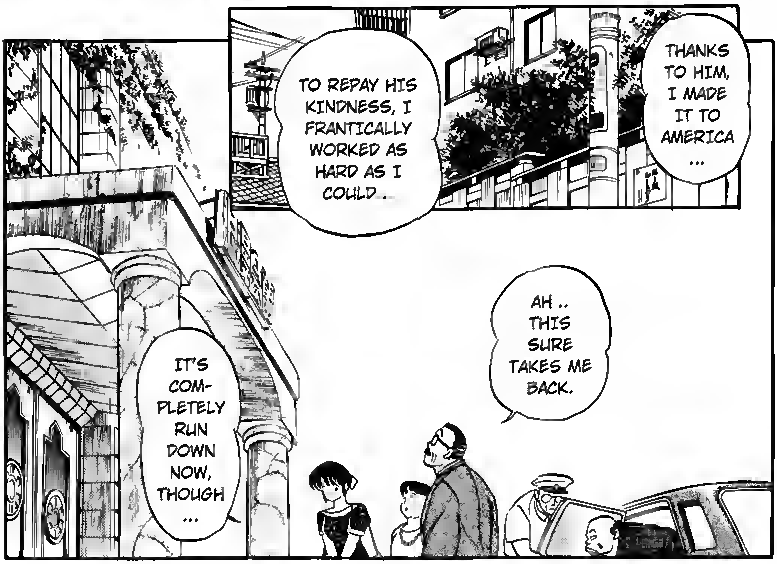

WELL, YOUR LATE FATHER MUST HAVE WANTED US TO MEET.
AWESOME, THIS IS AN ACTUAL CADILLAC..
RIGHT
SORRY IT'S SO CRAMPED

OH, THIS WAS WAY BACK, OVER 30 YEARS AGO..
SO... HOW DID YOU KNOW MY FATHER..?


HAHAHA, WELL I WAS YOUNG.
WHAT A PREPOS-TEROUS DREAM.
I USED TO WORK IN THE ROMANCE CHAPEL.
10
SOMEONE BURGLED ME.
I'D SAVED ALL MY MONEY FOR GOING TO AMERICA, AND IN MY SPARE TIME I WENT TO THE CHAPEL, BUT THAT DAY...
I WAS GOING TO USE ALL THE MONEY I'D EARNED AS CAPITAL TO RAISE MY FLAG IN AMERICA...

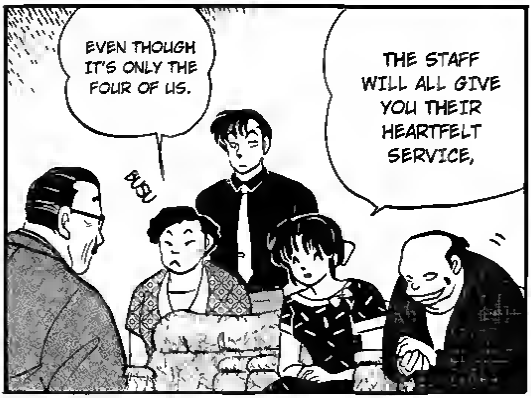

GO ON, USE THIS MONEY.
YOUR FATHER CAME TO SEE ME.
I COULDN'T SAVE SUCH A LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY AGAIN.
I WAS ON THE VERGE OF GIVING UP WHEN...
BUT BOSS. .
ONCE YOU'RE A SUCCESS IN AMERICA,
THEN YOU CAN PAY ME BACK.
YUP, THAT SOUNDS JUST LIKE HIM.
UH-HUH.

11

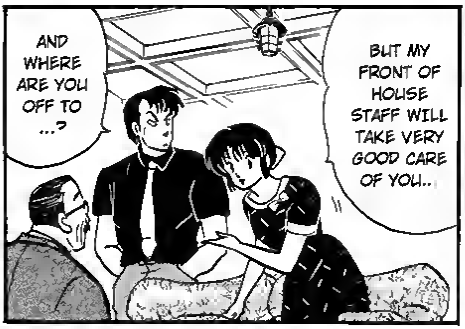

TO REPAY HIS KINDNESS, I FRANTICALLY WORKED AS HARD AS I COULD .
THANKS TO HIM, I MADE IT TO AMERICA ...
AH .. THIS SURE TAKES ME BACK.
IT'S COM-PLETELY RUN DOWN NOW, THOUGH ...

BUT WE NEVER HAD A WEDDING CEREMONY
WE MET IN AMERICA AND HAVE BEEN TOGETHER FOR 30 YEARS..
THE TRUTH IS, MY WIFE AND I..
HAVE YOUR CEREMONY HERE?
YOU WANT TO...
HUH?
YOU'RE SO SHAME-LESS!
BUT THIS GUY IS LOADED, AND HE OWES YOUR FATHER!
.....
HEY! DON'T JUST DECIDE THAT BY YOUR-SELVES!
WE CAN GET AN EXTRA BONUS PAYMENT, TOO.
THEN LET'S DO IT.
12
I STILL NEED TO PAY THOSE TWO THEIR SEVERANCE MONEY.
...BUT THAT'S RIGHT.

ABSOLUTELY. I REALLY WANT IT TO BE AT THE ROMANCE VILLA.
ARE YOU SURE IT'S OKAY? IN A PLACE LIKE THIS ..
UMM, SO ANYWAY ...

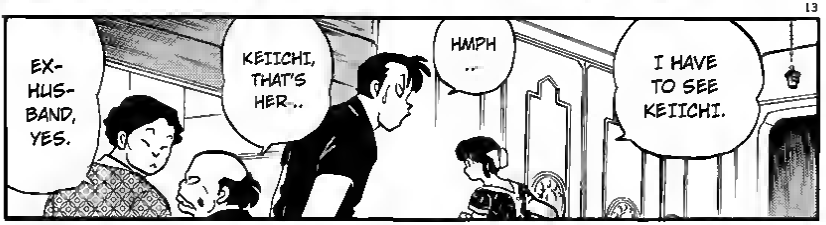

EVEN THOUGH IT'S ONLY THE FOUR OF US.
THE STAFF WILL ALL GIVE YOU THEIR HEARTFELT SERVICE,

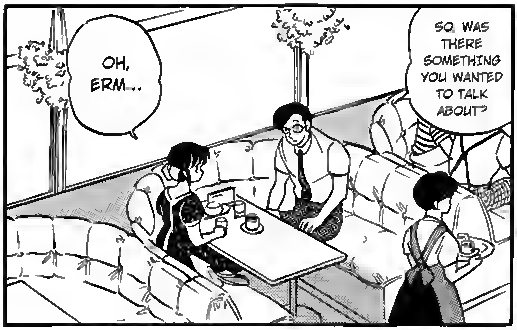
THEN THIS MUST BE SOME KIND OF FATE, THEN.
UNDER-STOOD.

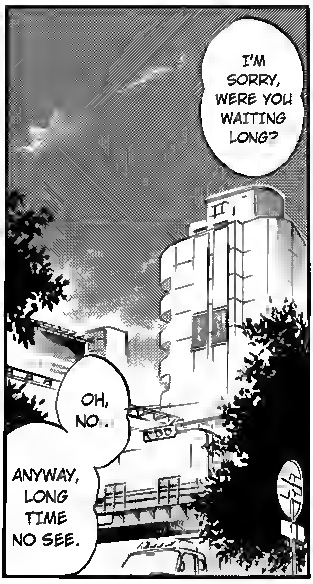

AND WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO ...?
BUT MY FRONT OF HOUSE STAFF WILL TAKE VERY GOOD CARE OF YOU..

I HAVE TO MEET SOME-ONE,
I'M AFRAID I MUST LEAVE.
AH..

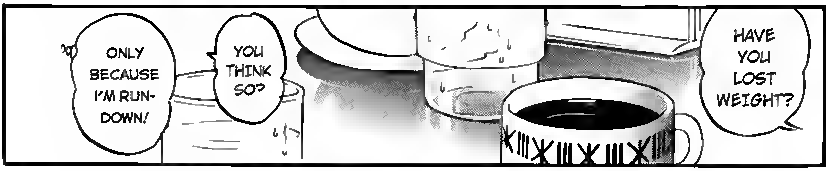
13


EX-HUS-BAND, YES.
KEIICHI, THAT'S HER..
HMPH ...
I HAVE TO SEE KEIICHI.

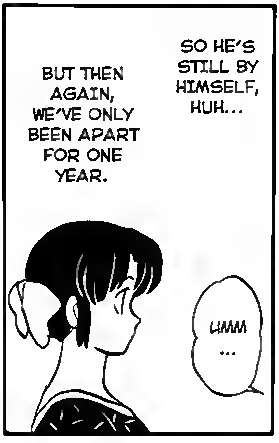

OH, ERM...
SO, WAS THERE SOMETHING YOU WANTED TO TALK ABOUT?

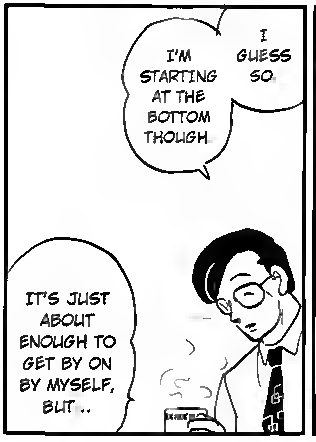

I'M SORRY, WERE YOU WAITING LONG?
OH, NO..
ANYWAY, LONG TIME NO SEE.

TO JUST SUDDENLY ASK HIM TO PAY THE ALI-MONY.
NOT SO MUCH.
IT'D BE KIND OF AWKWARD


ONLY BECAUSE I'M RUN-DOWN!
YOU THINK SO?
HAVE YOU LOST WEIGHT?

14

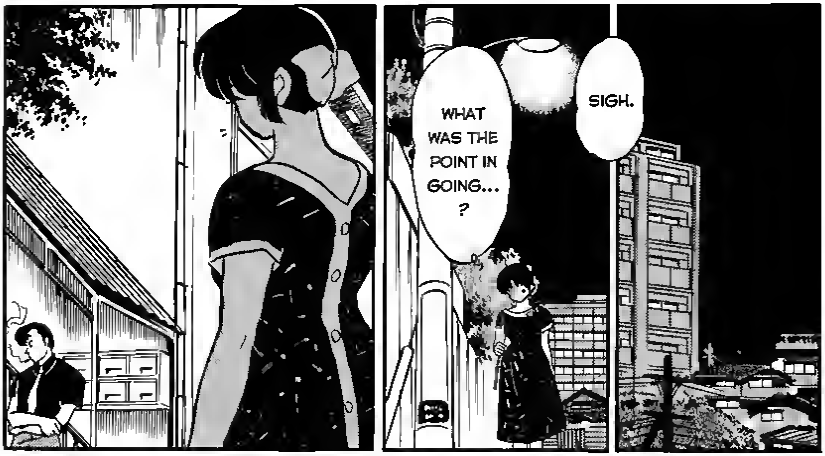

BUT THEN AGAIN, WE'VE ONLY BEEN APART FOR ONE YEAR.
SO HE'S STILL BY HIMSELF, HUH...
HMM ...


I'M STARTING AT THE BOTTOM THOUGH.
I GUESS SO.
IT'S JUST ABOUT ENOUGH TO GET BY ON BY MYSELF, BUT..

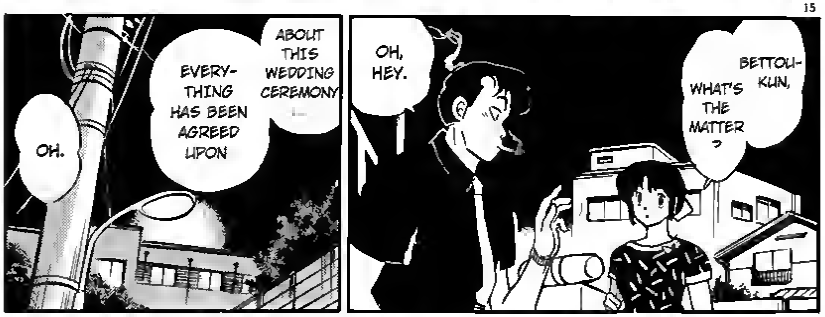
AND HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOU?
IS YOUR JOB GOING WELL?

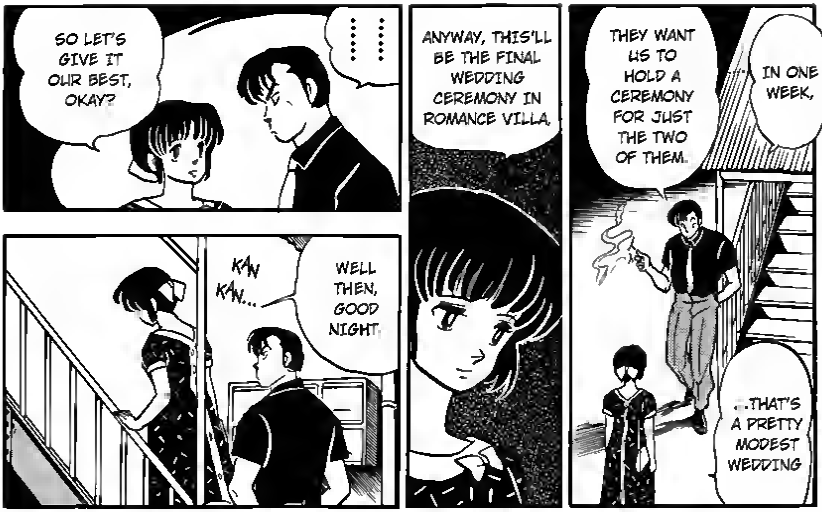
EH?
SORRY IT'S LATE...
ABOUT THE ALI-MONY...

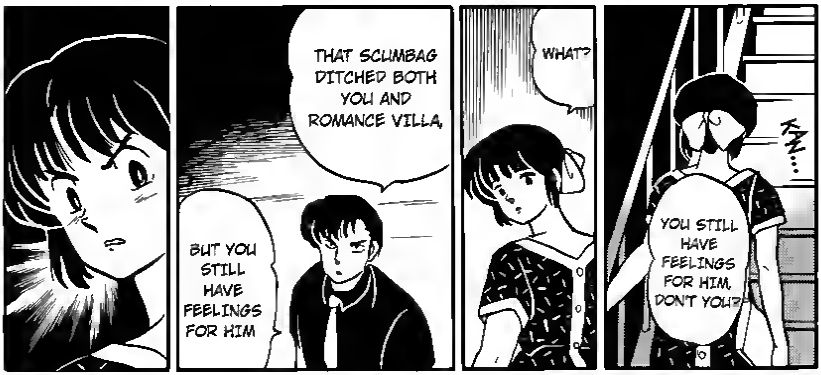
...ACTUALLY, IT IS.
OH, ERM, NO, THAT'S NOT A BIG DEAL...


SIGH.
WHAT WAS THE POINT IN GOING...?

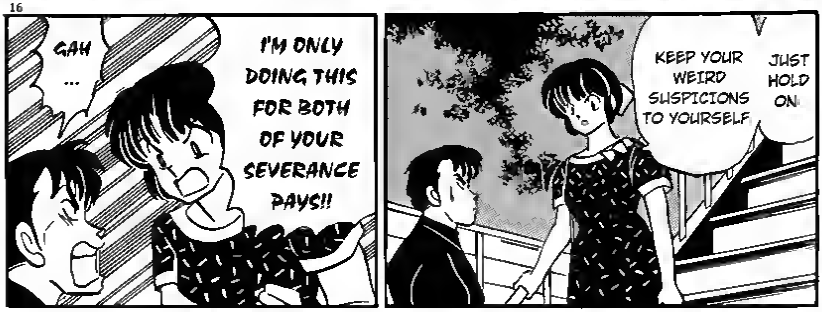
15


OH.
EVERY-THING HAS BEEN AGREED UPON
ABOUT THIS WEDDING CEREMONY...
OH, HEY.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
BETTOU-KUN,


SO LET'S GIVE IT OUR BEST, OKAY?
.....
ANYWAY, THIS'LL BE THE FINAL WEDDING CEREMONY IN ROMANCE VILLA.
THEY WANT US TO HOLD A CEREMONY FOR JUST THE TWO OF THEM.
IN ONE WEEK,
...THAT'S A PRETTY MODEST WEDDING
KA'N KA'N...
WELL THEN, GOOD NIGHT.

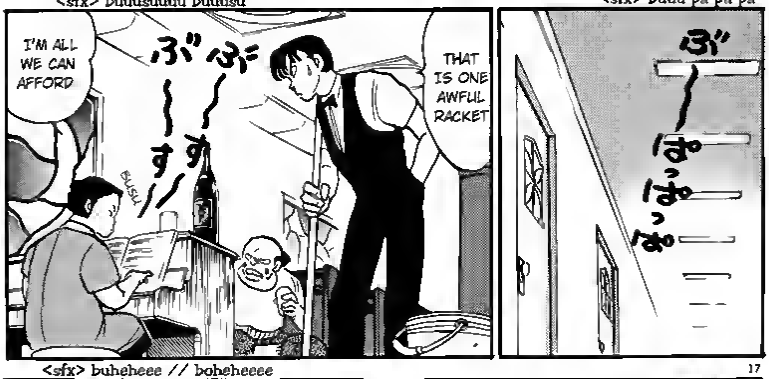

THAT SCUMBAG DITCHED BOTH YOU AND ROMANCE VILLA.
BUT YOU STILL HAVE FEELINGS FOR HIM
WHAT?
HMM...
YOU STILL HAVE FEELINGS FOR HIM, DON'T YOU?

16


GAH ...
I'M ONLY DOING THIS FOR BOTH OF YOUR SEVERANCE PAYS!!
JUST HOLD ON.
KEEP YOUR WEIRD SUSPICIONS TO YOURSELF

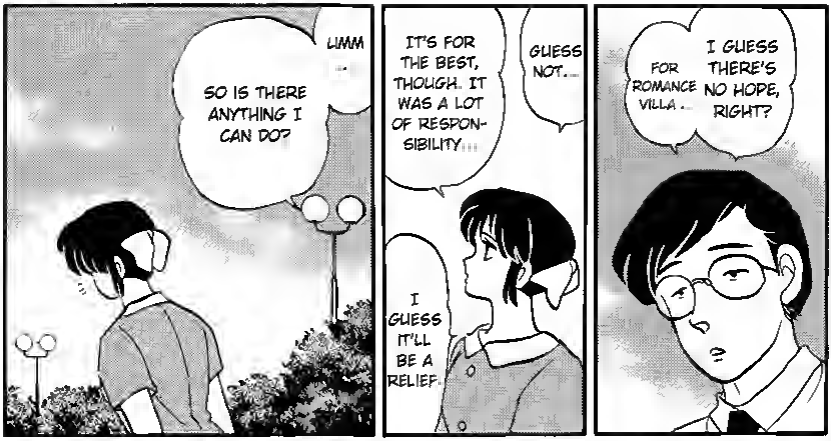
<sfx> kan kan kan kan
カン
カンカンカン
THAT IDIOT
YOU'RE THE IDIOT!!
WHO WANTS THAT MONEY ANYWAY, YOU LITTLE IDIOT!

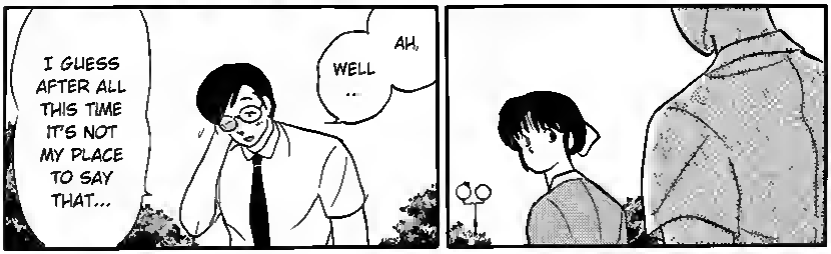
ROMANCE VILLA


<sfx> buuuguuuu buuugu
I'M ALL WE CAN AFFORD
ぶ〜ぶ〜す〜す〜
BUSU
THAT IS ONE AWFUL RACKET
<sfx> buuu pa pa pa
ぶ〜ぱっぱっぱ

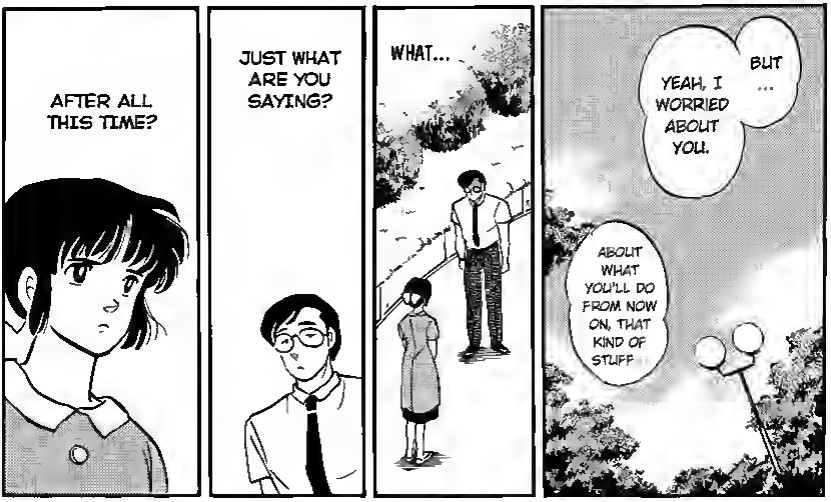
<sfx> buheheee // boheheeee
ぶぅ〜ぶぅ〜ぼぉ〜
HUH ?

<sfx> buuuuu~pa pa pa
I'M WILLING TO ACCEPT A PERFORMANCE FEE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO THAT ORGAN...?
<sfx> buheheeee
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW I'M A REAL CATHOLIC PRIEST.
I KNEW IT...
I WONDER IF I SHOULD HAVE JUST REFUSED THIS JOB ...
YOU WERE EXCOMMUNICATED 10 YEARS AGO!
YOU EXPECT TO BE PAID?
WHEN YOU'RE THAT BAD?
THE CEREMONY ALREADY HAS A FAKE PRIEST
NOW THEY HAVE AN ORGAN PLAYER TO MATCH.
18
I GUESS I WORRIED A LITTLE.
OH.
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
OH, NO IT'S JUST I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T LOOK SO UPBEAT WHEN WE LAST MET...
KEIICHI-SAN,
.....


I GUESS THERE'S NO HOPE, RIGHT?
FOR ROMANCE VILLA...
GUESS NOT...
IT'S FOR THE BEST, THOUGH. IT WAS A LOT OF RESPONSIBILITY...
I GUESS IT'LL BE A RELIEF.
UMM...
SO IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?

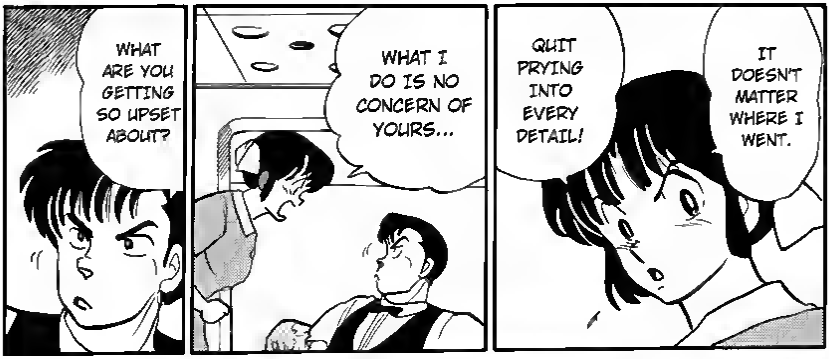

AH, WELL...
I GUESS AFTER ALL THIS TIME IT'S NOT MY PLACE TO SAY THAT...

19


BUT...
YEAH, I WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
ABOUT WHAT YOU'LL DO FROM NOW ON, THAT KIND OF STUFF...
WHAT...
JUST WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
AFTER ALL THIS TIME?

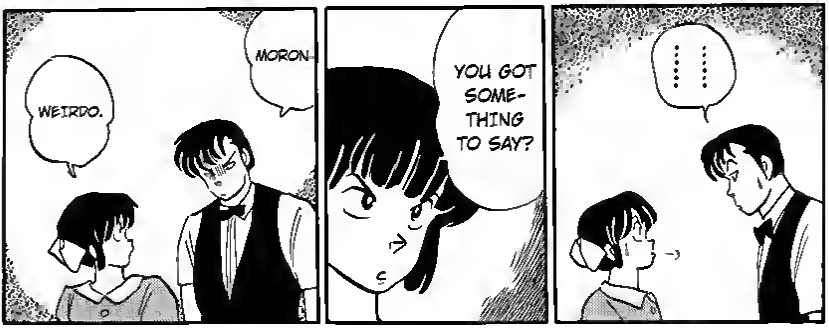
<sfx> baaaaa
.....
OH...
THOSE TWO...
DID THEY STOP BY HERE?
20
I SHOULD PRACTICE THE ORGAN MORE, TOO..
WELL, I GUESS WE HAVE TO REHEARSE A BIT MORE.
AND?
YEAH
?

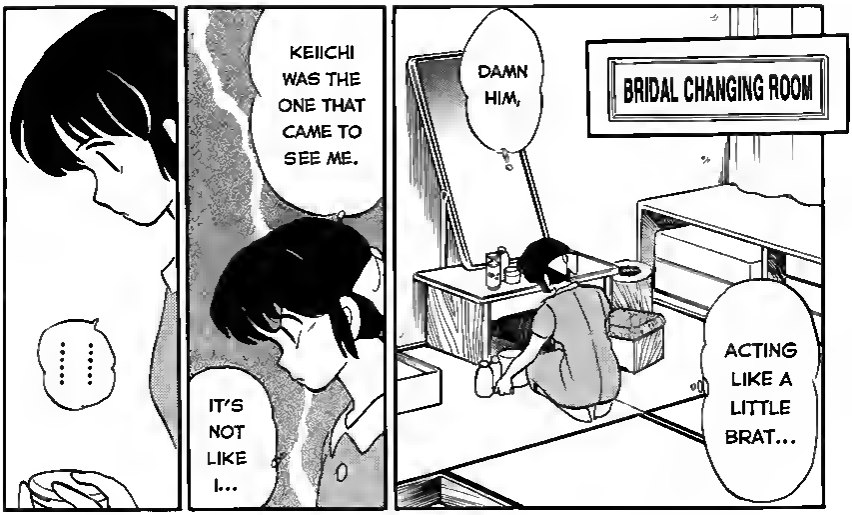
!
.. SO WHERE DID YOU GO OFF TO?


WHAT ARE YOU GETTING SO UPSET ABOUT?
WHAT I DO IS NO CONCERN OF YOURS...
QUIT PRYING INTO EVERY DETAIL!
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE I WENT.

I WAS JUST MEETING KEIICHI!!
YOU WERE UP TO SOMETHING, I THINK...
I WAS JUST ASKING.

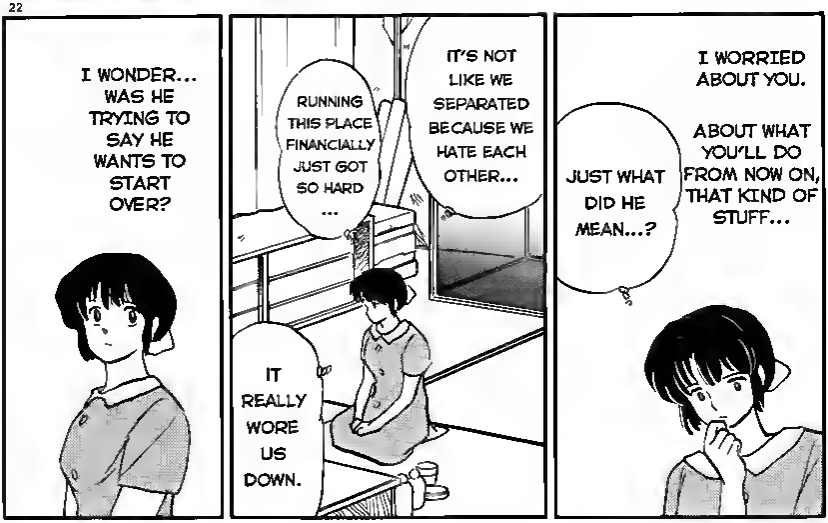
21

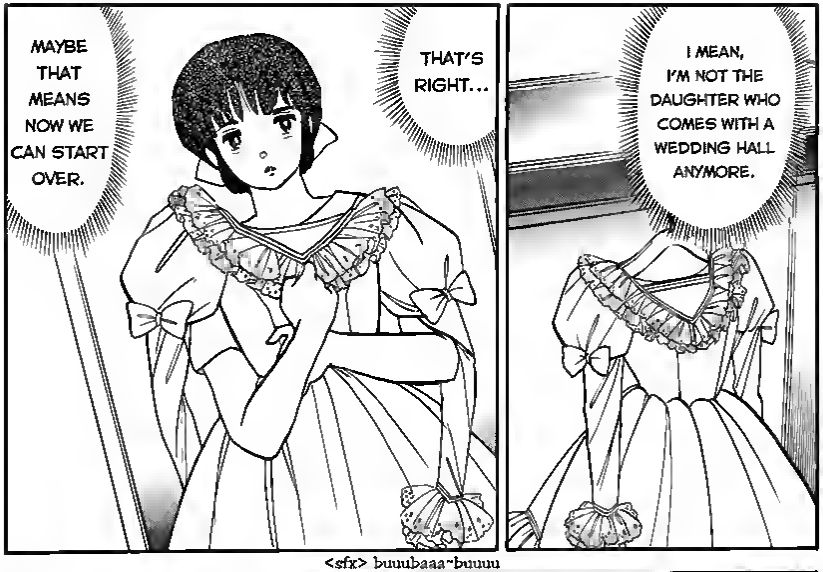

WEIRDO.
MORON
YOU GOT SOME-THING TO SAY?
.....


KEIICHI WAS THE ONE THAT CAME TO SEE ME.
IT'S NOT LIKE I...
DAMN HIM,
BRIDAL CHANGING ROOM
ACTING LIKE A LITTLE BRAT...

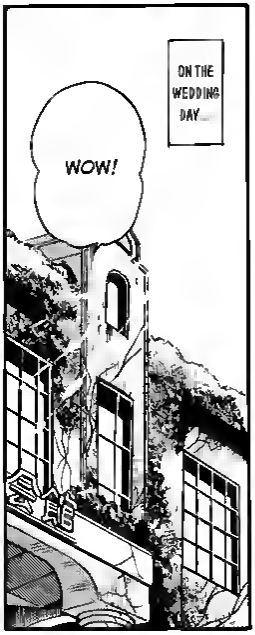
SO IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?

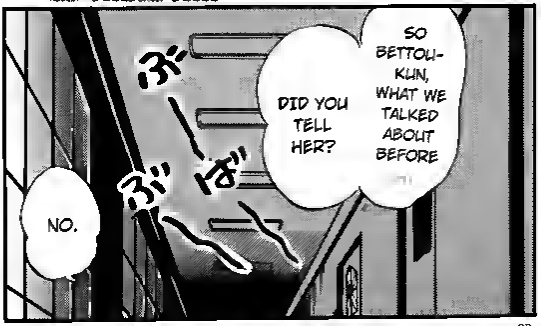
22


I WONDER... WAS HE TRYING TO SAY HE WANTS TO START OVER?
IT REALLY WORE US DOWN.
RUNNING THIS PLACE FINANCIALLY JUST GOT SO HARD ...
IT'S NOT LIKE WE SEPARATED BECAUSE WE HATE EACH OTHER...
JUST WHAT DID HE MEAN...?
I WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
ABOUT WHAT YOU'LL DO FROM NOW ON, THAT KIND OF STUFF...

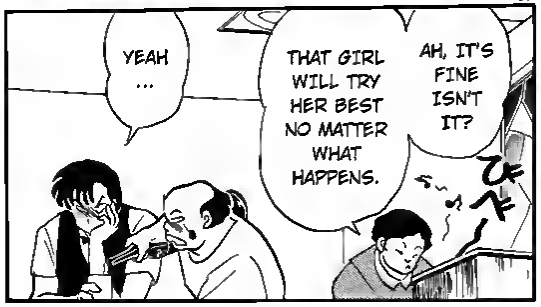


<sfx> buuubaaa~buuuu



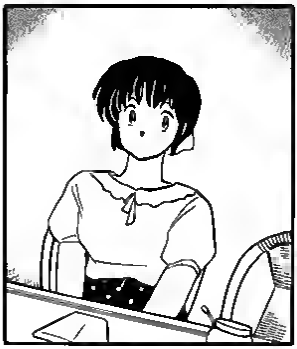


23



<sfx> rilin
YES, ROMANCE VILLA
OH, THE PHONE.
YOU'VE GOTTEN REALLY GOOD ON THE ORGAN!
KEIICHI-SAN!?
DOKI...
I want to see you.
I'm waiting in front of the station now...
EH...
UMM...
24
SORRY, I'LL BE BACK SOON.
THE BRIDE AND GROOM WILL BE ARRIVING SOON!
HEY, WHERE ARE YOU RUNNING OFF TO!?
...Maybe you can't come, right?

I WANT TO KNOW HOW KEIICHI FEELS SOON!
I THINK HE MIGHT WANT TO START OVER.



IT'S THE OVERDUE ALIMONY PAYMENTS.
HERE.

SAY YOU WANT TO START OVER.

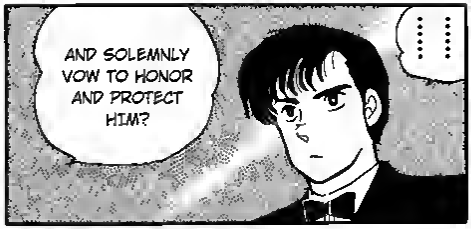
25

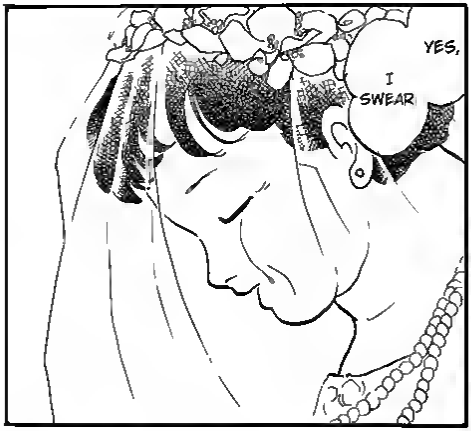
AND I GUESS THIS IS ALL I CAN DO FOR YOU...
I'M REALLY SORRY IT WAS LATE.
YEAH, I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOUR FUTURE. .

Coffee & Tea

RANDOMLY THINKING HE WOULD...
I'VE BEEN SUCH A FOOL...
THIS MONEY WILL BE A GREAT HELP.
IT'S FINE THOUGH.
26
DO YOU TAKE THIS WOMAN TO BE YOUR WIFE ..
YOU LOOK SO PRE-OCCUPIED.
WHAT HAP-PENED, YUKARI ...?

I'VE HAD IT UP TO HERE WITH MARRIAGE.
I SHOULD JUST ENJOY BEING SINGLE UNTIL I DIE.
...AS LONG AS YOU BOTH SHALL LIVE, UNTIL DEATH DO YOU PART
DO YOU SOLEMNLY VOW TO HONOR AND PROTECT HER?
I DO.
AND DO YOU TAKE THIS MAN,
IN SICK-NESS AND IN HEALTH,
FOR RICHER, FOR POORER,
THAT PART WAS JUST IMPOSSIBLE FOR US.
BEING POOR WAS JUST TOO HARD.
THROUGH JOY AND SORROW,
BUT IT WAS NEVER HIS MONEY THAT I WANTED.
27


AND SOLEMNLY VOW TO HONOR AND PROTECT HIM?
.....


YES, I SWEAR

28

TO LOVE, RESPECT AND COMFORT HIM...
ALL I REALLY WANTED WAS...

THANK YOU SO, SO, VERY MUCH.
THAT WEDDING WAS SO HEART-FELT.
AND TO THINK YOU HELD IT FREE OF CHARGE..
...!
FREE..?
THE TRUTH IS, OUR STOCKS DID TER-RIBLY.
FIVE DAYS AGO, WE WERE DECLARED BANKRUPT.
29
OH, DIDN'T I TELL YOU?
DROP THE ACT.
BUT WE CAN START OVER AGAIN.

YOUR FATHER USED TO SAY
THAT MARRIAGE IS A ROMANCE THAT STARTS FROM ZERO.
SO A WEDDING HALL IS LIKE GROUND ZERO IN A WAY.
THE PLACE WHERE YOUR FATHER
HELPED ME WITH MY DREAMS AND LET ME MEET MY WIFE...
ROMANCE VILLA IS WHERE I WANTED TO START OVER...
THAT'S WHY I CHOSE THIS PLACE ..
30
OH NO, WE'RE WEAK.
...YOU'RE VERY STRONG.
HA HA HA, WE'VE LIVED IN POVERTY BEFORE.
TOUGH FOR SURE.
IT'LL BE TOUGH FROM HERE ON, THOUGH.
BUSU

YOUNG LADY, I HOPE YOU ALSO FIND SOMEONE SPECIAL SOON.
BESIDES, AT OUR AGE
ALL WE HAVE IS EACH OTHER.
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM ?
ERM THAT IS.
I MEAN, I'M ALREADY
31
YES, DARLING
WELL, SHALL WE?
NO, IT WASN'T.
..THAT WAS UN-CALLED FOR.
HAVEN'T YOU RETURNED TO ZERO TOO?

THIS PLACE IS STILL FULL OF DEBT...
32
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO WANTED TO GIVE UP ANYWAY.
SO LET'S TRY KEEPING THIS PLACE GOING UNTIL WE CAN REACH ZERO?

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